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LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: NGO VEHICLE HITS LANDMINE IN OGADEN REGION OF
ETHIOPIA - 3 KILLED

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2375 (AND PREVIOUS)

11. (U) SUMMARY: On July 29, a vehicle belonging to a nongovernmental organization traveling in the Ogaden area of Ethiopia's Somali Region hit a landmine, resulting in three killed. The landmine incident occurred in an area where the Ethiopian military is conducting ongoing military operations against suspected Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) rebels. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) On July 29, a vehicle belonging to a local NGO, the Ogaden Welfare and Development Association (OWDA), hit a landmine while traveling in the Ogaden area of Ethiopia, resulting in three passengers killed. OWDA works in the region as an implementing partner for Save the Children, and receives some support from USAID. All casualties were Ethiopian nationals employed by OWDA.

13. (U) This incident occurred in the remote and volatile Ogaden area of the Ethiopia's Somali Region, in the proximity of Degehamedo located in Degehabur Zone. This area is located approximately 250 miles from Addis Ababa. The vehicle struck the landmine while traveling on an unpaved road, approximately 35 miles off the main road in the vicinity of Fik. Additional details regarding this incident are unknown, and will be reported as they are made available.

14. (U) Due to the non-permissive security environment throughout the Ogaden, Post already has a policy restricting official and personal travel by mission personnel to the Somali Region. Ethiopia's consular information sheet also cautions American citizens not to travel in this region.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: It is difficult to determine who placed the landmine. NGOs operating in the Ogaden assess that Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) rebels have been placing landmines in order to target vehicles belonging to the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), as ENDF vehicles are currently the primary ones on the roads in the Ogaden, due to restrictions on commercial vehicular traffic imposed as part of the ENDF's ongoing counterinsurgency. The ENDF is currently engaged in military/security operations throughout the Ogaden in an effort to neutralize threats posed by the ONLF. The Degehabur and Fik Zones remain volatile areas, as they are two of the five zones in the Somali Region where military operations are ongoing

against the ONLF. END COMMENT.

YAMAMOTO